M 307note-44

38TH CONGRESS, 1st Session. } SENATE. { EX. DOC. No. 44.

MESSAGE

OF THE

PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES,

TRANSMITTING

A report from the Secretary of the Interior of the 14th instant, and accompanying papers, in answer to a resolution of the Senate of the 14th ultimo, calling for the reasons why the refugee Indians in the State of Kansas have not been returned to their homes.

MAY 16, 1864.—Read and ordered to be printed.

To the Senate of the United States:

I transmit herewith a report of the Secretary of the Interior of the 14th instant, and accompanying papers, in answer to a resolution of the Senate of the 14th ultimo, in the following words, viz:

"*Resolved*, That the President of the United States be requested to communicate to the Senate the reasons, if any exist, why the refugee Indians in the State of Kansas are not returned to their homes."

ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

EXECUTIVE MANSION,
Washington, May 14, 1864.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
Washington, D. C., May 14, 1864.

SIR: I transmit herewith a copy of a report of the 11th instant, from the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, and accompanying papers, respecting the refugee Indians in the State of Kansas, which were the subject of a resolution of the Senate of the 14th ultimo, referred by you to this department on the 18th ultimo, in the following words, viz:

"*Resolved*, That the President of the United States be requested to communicate to the Senate the reasons, if any exist, why the refugee Indians in the State of Kansas are not returned to their homes."

I am, sir, with great respect, your obedient servant,

J. P. USHER, *Secretary.*

The PRESIDENT *of the United States.*

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
Office of Indian Affairs, May 11, 1864.

SIR: I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt, by reference from you, of a resolution of the United States Senate, calling upon the President for information for "the reasons, if any exist, why the refugee Indians in the State of Kansas are not returned to their homes," upon which resolution you call for a report from this office.

In compliance therewith, I have the honor to state that the same causes which made these Indians refugees have hitherto prevented their return to their homes. Their country has been infested with, or constantly liable to the incursions of, roving bands of rebels, or hostile Indians, seeking for plunder, and murdering all who would not join them in their hostility to the government. Most of their warriors are serving the government in the army, and, under any circumstances, these Indians would be unable to protect themselves against the rebels and hostile Indians. While the military authorities have been able to hold certain posts in the Indian country, the protection from this source would have been wholly inadequate for the Indians in their homes, engaged in agricultural and other pursuits. To return these refugees to their homes under such circumstances would have been to consign them to almost certain annihilation—a crime against humanity too revolting to be contemplated.

Under the existing circumstances there seemed to be no other safe and humane course to be pursued but to retain them in a place of safety and provide for their wants as far as the means at the disposal of the department would admit. As a matter of economy to the government, this has undoubtedly been a wise policy; for, by having the Indians located near the base of supplies, the unavoidably enormous expenditure for transportation has been saved.

But had it been deemed safe or expedient to return the refugees to their homes, the department has hitherto been unable to do so for want of the necessary appropriation to defray the expense of their removal, and to provide for their re-establishment in agricultural pursuits. The recent appropriation of $223,000 by Congress has removed that obstacle, and I consider this appropriation equivalent to an instruction to return the refugees to their homes, and nothing but the strongest reasons will prevent my doing so immediately.

Anticipating the appropriation for the purpose, steps preparatory to a return of the refugees were taken, as will be seen from the instructions from this office, to Superintendent Coffin, under date of April 13, 1864, a copy of which is herewith transmitted. Owing, however, to the lateness of the season at the date of the appropriation, as well as to the unpropitious aspect of military affairs in the southwest, Superintendent Coffin was, on the 7th instant, (copy herewith,) instructed to be governed, in relation to the removal, by circumstances existing at the time he should receive said instructions.

As I am unadvised as to the state of preparations for the removal of the refugees, I am unable to furnish any indication as to the action Superintendent Coffin may take in relation thereto when he shall have received his instructions of the 7th instant; but I hope soon to receive such advices from him as will justify me in directing him to proceed at once with the removal.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

W. P. DOLE,
Commissioner.

Hon. J. P. USHER,
Secretary of the Interior.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
Office of Indian Affairs, April 13, 1864.

SIR: I deem it very important that the southern refugee Indians, now in Kansas, be at once removed to their homes, and you will take immediate steps to accomplish that object. In doing so you must exercise the most rigid economy. I am aware that there is not now at my disposal sufficient funds to pay the necessary expenses of such removal, but there is before the House of Representatives a bill making appropriation for this purpose; and that bill having been favorably considered by the House Committee on Indian Affairs, I have every reason to believe it will pass the House and become a law. I therefore, in view of the positive necessity of immediate action, if they are to reach their homes in time to put in a crop this season, have decided to direct you to proceed at once to carry out these instructions.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

W. P. DOLE, *Commissioner.*

W. G. COFFIN, Esq.,
Superintendent Indian Affairs.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
Office of Indian Affairs, May 7, 1864.

SIR: I have this day caused a requisition to be made in your favor for the sum of forty-five thousand dollars, ($45,000,) from the amount appropriated to aid the Indian refugees to return to their homes in the Indian country, as follows, viz:

For expenses of transportation and subsistence by the way to the Indian country	$15,000
For temporary subsistence in the Indian country, of refugee and Christian Indians	25,000
For seeds, ploughs, and agricultural implements	5,000
Total	45,000

For which you will be held accountable accordingly.

I had intended to send a much larger sum for this service, but the lateness of the season, (now the 7th day of May,) and the time which would probably elapse, even with good fortune, before you could possibly return the Indians to their homes, in connexion with the fact of the apparent failure of the campaign beyond the Arkansas and Red rivers, and the reported reappearance of Quantrill, has induced the Secretary of the Interior to hesitate in signing the requisition for the amount I proposed; and after much perplexity and deliberation he has concluded that, of the appropriation, the amount now remitted is all that ought to be used at present.

You will observe that the law is special, and that the intention of Congress was to provide for the removal of the Indians, and we cannot be justified, in the opinion of the Secretary, in expending it to any extent in Kansas.

As it appears here, to-day, it will be unsafe and impolitic to attempt the removal of the Indians at this time; but the case may be altered by the time this reaches you. Consequently, much must be left to your sound discretion as to the manner you shall act. If, upon the receipt of this, it shall be evident that there is no reasonable apprehension of danger of meeting Quantrill and his followers upon the way, and everything shall appear auspicious for the undertaking, and you shall have made the necessary and proper arrangements for transportation, you will telegraph the fact, and measures will be taken immediately for a further

supply of funds necessary to your purposes. If, on the other hand, you should apprehend that your effort at the removal will probably result disastrously, in that case it occurs to me that it will be best for you to take immediate steps to have the refugees enlarge their gardens and cultivate lands where they now are, to the extent of their ability, and make every effort to produce a supply for the next winter. And, to enable them to do this, I think you may, without risk of censure, if you find it necessary, use so much or all of the sum sent you for seed, &c., in supplying them for their present planting and implements of husbandry; and if you find it necessary, in order to carry out the purposes of the government in this regard, you may provide the Indians with some oxen for ploughing, as it is not probable that any loss would be sustained on account of their depreciation if proper care be taken of them.

It may turn out that the prospects will soon be more hopeful. If so, perhaps a portion of the Indians may then be removed; and it may be that after the grass shall have grown many of them will be able to return without expense to the government, which, in any event, it is expected they will do, as far as possible.

As this money was appropriated for a special purpose, I would advise you that it will not do to mingle it with your general or other funds. If any of it is expended in Kansas it must be only in the necessary furtherance of the design of Congress, as specified in the act of appropriation; but seed, &c., purchased for the purpose of establishing them at their homes may be used where they are, if you find that you cannot succeed as you designed.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

W. P. DOLE, *Commissioner.*

WILLIAM G. COFFIN, Esq.,
Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Leavenworth, Kansas.

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